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The Planetary Society

LightSail-A NOAA Licensee Public Summary

LightSail-A is the first of two 3U Cubesats that will demonstrate solar sailing technology in Earth orbit. Launch is scheduled for May 2015 from CCAFS as a secondary payload on an Atlas V launch vehicle. After reaching low Earth orbit, LightSail-A will deploy a ~32 square meter Mylar solar sail in order to validate the design and performance of the deployment and control system and to study the behavior of the sail in space. The mission duration following sail deployment is expected to be less than 10 days, after which the orbit will decay due to atmospheric drag. A subsequent mission, LightSail-B, will be launched in 2016 to further validate sail performance at a higher orbit including more extensive operations.

Sail system performance will be documented by two on-board cameras provided by the Aerospace Corporation's PICOSAT Project Group, augmented by ground tracking data. Tracking and mission operations will be conducted at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and at Georgia Institute of Technology. The launch is funded as a part of NASA's Educational Launch of Nanosatellites (ELaNa) initiative.

LightSail is a program of The Planetary Society and is funded exclusively by private donations. Project management including flight system validation, integration, and test are provided by Ecliptic Enterprises Corporation, Pasadena, CA. The spacecraft was built by Stellar Exploration Systems, Mountain View, CA.

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